



Africa summit hears medical plea

Western governments need to prevent medical staff leaving Malawi and other poverty-stricken countries, an Aids worker has warned.

The plea was made as 80 politicians from around the world gathered at the Scottish Parliament to draft a rescue plan for Africa.

Dr Tiwonge Loga said action was needed to tackle the "brain drain" in Malawi.

Proposals at the two-day G8 Parliamentarians Conference will be put to the G8 summit at Gleneagles in July.

The gathering at Holyrood includes Uganda's trade minister, the women's minister from Gambia and the director of the HIV/Aids programme at the World Health Organisation.

You can help boost the quality and quantity of aid

Cyril Muller
World Bank

As well as moves on debt, aid and fair trade, the conference is featuring ideas on giving women more power in Africa and on tackling diseases like Aids.

The conference includes separate sessions on war and peace, trade and the economy, good government, sustainable development and agriculture.

Dr Loga, director of the National Association of People Living With HIV/Aids in Malawi, told delegates: "We do have a lot of brain drain in Malawi.

"We lose a lot of nurses, we lose a lot of medical doctors and we lose them to countries like Scotland and England so that's where governments can also help us."

'Moral obligation'

The Scottish Executive said it does not actively recruit nurses from Africa although individual nurses may apply for jobs in Scotland and it could not discriminate on nationality grounds.

Cyril Muller, of the World Bank, said the 47 countries of sub-Saharan Africa had seen "a deepening of poverty" among the combined 700 million population.

Mr Muller said "strong coalitions" of business, civic and voluntary groups and government were needed to push for action on trade, debt and aid.

"Crucially, parliamentarians are needed in this effort. You can help boost the quality and quantity of aid, you can keep your government leaders to account on their international promises," he

added.

Betty McCollum, a Democratic US congresswoman, said the G8 nations had "a moral obligation to help our African brothers and sisters".

She said: "It's also in our strategic interest in the US and in the developed democracies to have a continent of Africa sustainable and strong."

Delegates are preparing a declaration which will accompany the UK Chancellor Gordon Brown's 'Marshall plan' and demands from the Make Poverty History campaign.

The Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer George Reid welcomed Holyrood being used as a platform to discuss issues facing Africa.

He said the health of mothers and children was "the real worth of any society".

"Women, their rights, their reproductive health and their education are the key to sustainable development," he said.

Hypocrisy warning

"They are the issues about which the massive crowds of campaigners who come to Scotland feel strongly."

Scottish National Party deputy leader Nicola Sturgeon said Scotland should raise its contribution to international development spending to 0.7% of national income.

"Today's conference will add to pressure on G8 leaders to make a real difference to the lives of millions of Africans across the continent," she said.

Scottish Tory leader David McLetchie said western governments had a moral responsibility to help those who are less fortunate.

"It is hypocritical of us to lecture the Third World about the importance of these principles if we then prevent those countries reaping the rewards by trading with us," he said.

Story from BBC NEWS:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/4607801.stm

Published: 2005/06/06 14:30:43 GMT

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